

MERCY CORPS

URBAN PROGRAMMING

CAPACITY STATEMENT



Photo: Bogotá, Colombia for Mercy Corps

INTRODUCTION

Mercy Corps helps people in the world's toughest places turn the crises of natural disaster, poverty and conflict into opportunities for progress. Driven by local needs and market conditions, our programs provide communities with the tools and support they need to transform their own lives. Our worldwide team of 3,700 professionals is improving the lives of 14.5 million people in more than 40 countries. In recognition of the rapid and complex global demographic shifts, resulting from rapid urban population growth and the complex dynamic of urban livelihood, Mercy Corps currently operates upwards of 50 urban projects in over 20 countries, worth approximately \$175 million¹. These projects specifically work to **improve the quality of urban communities by developing programs that address the nexus of integrated and complex urban issues in order to support secure, productive and just communities.**

According to the United Nations, 2007 marked the first time when more people lived in urban than rural areas, with 50% of the global population (3.3 billion citizens) living in cities. It is projected that by 2050 the world population will increase by 2.5 billion (to 9.1 billion), while urban populations will swell by 3.1 billion, (to 6.4

¹ "Urban Projects" includes two types of urban programming: First, it includes the programs strategically designed to address urban specific issues and environments. These programs address multi-sector issues and the design of which is distinguishable from rural programming. The second type of projects included in this total are those programs that address urban issues within the context of larger programmatic goals or locations but are not designed to exclusively address urban only issues.

billion).² This means that urban areas would likely absorb all expected population growth over the next four decades. Rural-to-urban migration patterns compound these urban population pressures and indicate a 0.6 billion decrease in global rural populations by 2050. Cities—especially smaller size cities—and urban communities of the less developed regions will experience the majority of urban population growth.

An increase in urban poverty rates accompanies this urban population growth. The share of the population living with less than one dollar a day decreased in rural areas but increased in urban areas between 1993-2002.³ As trends in population growth and economic hardship converge in urban areas, this ever-increasing share of the global population confronts increasingly challenging conditions: worldwide, one in three urban dwellers lives in a slum and urban slum growth is outpacing urban population growth in developing regions.⁴ The design and application of Mercy Corps programming provide an effective means to address complex and transitional urban environments. With an inter-sectoral and territorial approach to addressing urban poverty, Mercy Corps programs focus on the crosscutting themes of **Quality of Life, Governance and Capacity Building**.

MERCY CORPS URBAN PROGRAMMING APPROACH

Urban Programming Goal

Mercy Corps strives to enhance the positive contributions urbanization offers while mitigating negative impacts on basic needs and livelihood, human rights and secure society.

Structuring a Response

From experience working with urban communities in over 20 countries, Mercy Corps has developed powerful approaches to catalyze change in urban environments. Mercy Corps helps city dwellers advocate for their needs, while building the capacity of – and partnerships between – government, community organizations and the private sector to respond to these needs and scale up responses. Urban poor environments are geographically, socially, and economically dynamic. In response, Mercy Corps scales its urban programming at distinct levels to fit the needs and contexts of these diverse communities:

Integrated Urban Interventions: Integrated and multi-sector programming targets the nexus of urban issues by addressing short-term vulnerabilities and long-term viability of urban livelihoods.

Rural-Urban Migration: Urban poverty programming strategically designed to address the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas and provide positive economic linkages for communities with strong rural-urban connections.

Integrated Urban Interventions

The Approach

Urban environments are dynamic and multi-dimensional and therefore require an integrated and multi-sector approach to address the challenges faced by urban poor populations and governments. Migration to cities is increasing in every region of the world, putting stress on what is often antiquated infrastructure, inadequate public services and traditional urban planning policies that do not serve the needs of the most marginalized. In densely populated urban environments, illness can quickly become epidemic, tension can spark violent conflict, and climatic stress can wreak catastrophe. While urban growth generates economic opportunities and advantages for some it accentuates the vulnerabilities of others and magnifies challenges in these environments.

Mercy Corps has strategically designed integrated urban programs to address the multiple issues faced by

² United Nations Populations Division (2008), "World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision"

³ Ravallion, M., Chen S. and Sangraula, P. (2007). New Evidence on the Urbanization of Global Poverty. In: *Population and Development Review* 33 (4), pp. 667–701.

⁴ 2007 Human Development Report (HDR), United Nations Development Program, November 27, 2007, p.25.

urban communities and their need to access financial services, employment opportunities, basic needs, and political representation and voice. Mercy Corps recognizes that a multi-sector approach is best positioned to address the inter-related needs of urban populations. In order to achieve the goal of supporting secure, productive, and just societies, integrated urban interventions focus on three main areas:

1. Vulnerable Populations: In order to live in areas strategic to employment, the poorest urban residents more often rent—rather than own—shelter in quasi-legal settlements with poor urban services. These residents pay higher percentages of their household income for basic services like water, sanitation, and solid waste removal, as well as for access to basic health care and education, and often do not have political representation. The urban poor, especially those caught in cyclical rural-urban migration patterns, remain vulnerable to both public and private sector intervention. Since the urban poor lack the protections of legal documentation and due process, many remain powerless against land disputes, unfair land settlements, biased land resolutions, sudden and forced evictions, and other challenges that hinder household stability and advancement. In addition, urban poor are vulnerable to malnutrition, food insecurity and limited, to no access to health care. The convergence of these conditions results in millions of people around the world struggling to support themselves in turbulent and unstable environments.

2. Vulnerable Areas: As urban areas around the world rapidly accommodate population growth and migration, expanding populations stress what are often inadequate and old public infrastructure systems, leading to large system delivery failures for basic services such as water supply, sanitation, health care, transport, electricity and other services. In some areas of the world, population growth is so swift and uncoordinated that urban areas and governments confront rapidly growing settlements in locations with



limited or non-existent public services or infrastructure. These marginal areas are also often in environmentally sensitive areas—prone to flooding, drought or fire—or within close proximity of industrial toxins, waste, or water and air pollutant sources. These conditions further burden the social, economic and environmental systems of these vulnerable areas.

3. Economic and Social Connections: The challenges faced by vulnerable urban populations and vulnerable urban areas often exist in tandem with inequitable economic development practices, both in the formal and informal sectors. Rapid and uncontrolled urban growth often outpaces economic development and opportunity, especially for the urban poor. Where Mercy Corps develops strategies that support the natural entrepreneurship of urban poor residents Mercy Corps supports those most in need through equitable economic development.

The Approach in Action: Indonesia

For Mercy Corps Indonesia, addressing urban poverty has been a program focus since our inception. The extreme hardships experienced in Jakarta's slums during and following the 1998 economic crisis led Mercy Corps Indonesia to initiate development operations in 1999. Our early work, from 1999-2005, was in the form of nutritional assistance and health education, coupled with livelihood support in Jakarta's poorest communities. This was also a period for initiating long-term

In Jakarta, Mercy Corps is working with parents, teachers, and street food vendors to improve child nutrition.

Photo: Indonesia for Mercy Corps

collaborative relationships with local communities, municipal and provincial governments, and private sector partners. In 2006 Mercy Corps Indonesia expanded its urban program. Nutrition and health programs grew while new initiatives began to address urban infrastructure and basic needs services. Mercy Corps Indonesia introduced into its programming activities related to water supply, sanitation, solid waste, and disaster response and disaster risk reduction. In 2006-2007, Mercy Corps Indonesia began a significant evidence-based research phase with local partners to generate a nuanced understanding of the causes and conditions of urban poverty. Research into the economy of urban environmental services, land tenure, informal economy, land-use planning, and the spatial, social, and economic dimensions of slum communities has informed existing urban programs and helped Mercy Corps develop new program initiatives and partnerships with diverse urban actors.

The Approach in Action: Zimbabwe

Since 2006, Mercy Corps has contributed to a unique, integrated response to the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. The NGO Joint Initiative (JI) for Urban Zimbabwe is a coordinated humanitarian response to address the short and medium-term needs of highly vulnerable urban communities. Mercy Corps has helped successfully deliver the JI's overall goal to restore dignity and reduce suffering for thousands of the most vulnerable households in urban and peri-urban areas of Zimbabwe. While the need in Zimbabwe continues to increase, Mercy Corps helped JI beneficiaries attain hope, success and, in some cases, self-sufficiency in Phase I (May 2006 - March 2008) through programs in livelihoods, food security, shelter, HIV/AIDS service delivery and child protection/education assistance. By the end of the five-year program, the group aims to support up to 12,000 households. Mercy Corps is also working to improve urban health for up to 4,000 residents in densely populated Mutare by installing or renovating water points and latrines in the city's marketplace and suburbs.

The Approach in Action: Columbia

Mercy Corps Colombia has focused a significant part of its programmatic portfolio in urban areas in Colombia. The 45 year internal conflict has resulted in the displacement of nearly 5 million people over the past 20 years, with the majority of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) settling in the urban and peri-urban slums that ring Colombia's mega-cities – Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Cartagena, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga – to name a few. Mercy Corps' approach is to work with local partners – local NGOs and CBOs – to form alliances and networks, and pressure local governments to adopt public policies that promote the inclusion of IDPs and vulnerable populations into decision-making and urban planning. Mercy Corps provides the initial funds to catalyze and leverage public and private sector investment to tackle social, economic and environmental problems in poor, marginalized neighborhoods. An integrated, multi-sectoral approach is utilized to tackle inter-related problems – where programs build upon one another and the social capital fostered by Mercy Corps and its partners. Mercy Corps integrates participatory planning, conflict management and resolution, food security, social justice, and environment and disaster risk reduction strategies into its Columbia urban programming.

Rural-Urban Migration

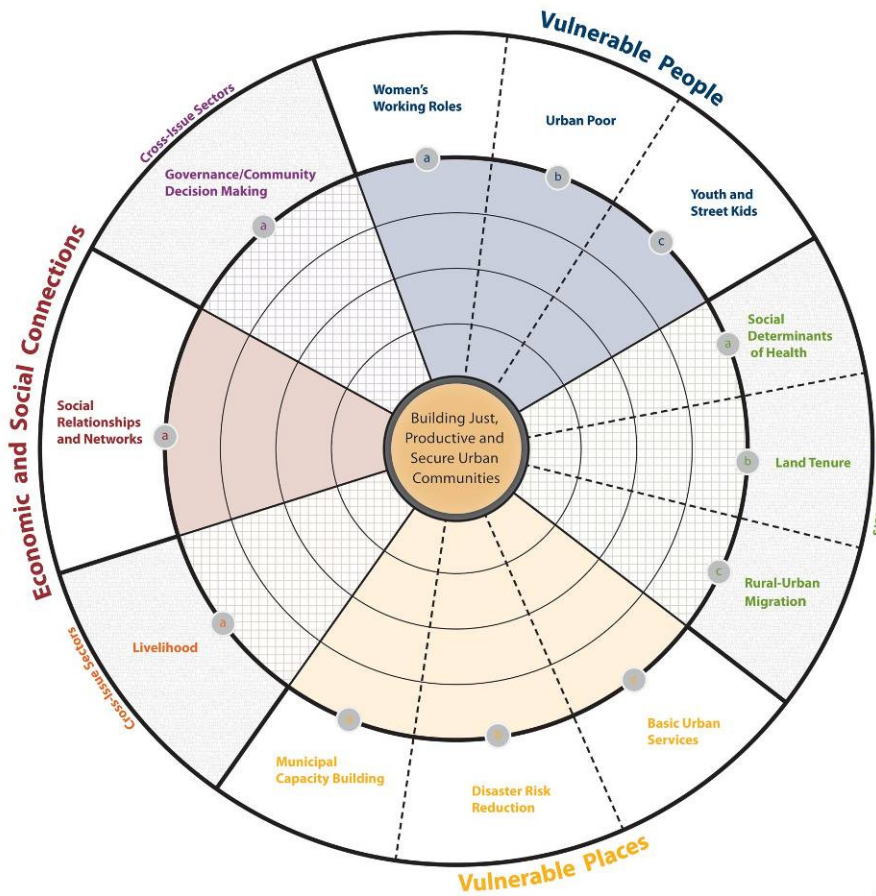
The Approach

Mercy Corps recognizes the dynamic relationship between urban and rural communities and is working to slow urban migration trends through supporting economic opportunities in rural communities. Mercy Corps urban programming builds off strong connections that vulnerable urban populations often maintain with their rural home communities. This approach develops programs that enhance sustainable economic development networks between urban and rural communities. As part of this strategy to support the critical social and economic linkages between urban and rural communities, Mercy Corps works in rural communities whose populations and economies experience the negative impacts of rural-urban migration.

VISUALIZING INTEGRATED URBAN INTERVENTIONS

Urban programming integrates multi-sector based approaches to address the root causes of urban poverty. The following diagram illustrates Mercy Corps’ Integrated Urban approach and demonstrates the range of methods used to support urban communities. In addition, the diagram visually represents the dynamic relationship between sectors and programming areas: none of the sectors that Mercy Corps works in are exclusive to any one of the three Integrated Urban Intervention Areas (Vulnerable People, Vulnerable Places, and Economic and Social Connections). Urban communities comprise dynamic and complex

networks between people and place; therefore Mercy Corps does not program by sector but rather recognizes the reciprocal dynamic between sectors. This diagram is also a tool for programmatic analysis—program teams can track their progress by integrating sector specific indicators within each sector area. These indicators visually represent the sectors each program addresses and signal programming successes.



Vulnerable Places

- a** Basic Urban Services
 - safe housing/shelter
 - water and sanitation infrastructure
 - food security/urban infrastructure
 - healthcare facilities/clinics
 - education facilities
 - open space/parks
 - public space
 - energy infrastructure
 - transportation
- b** Disaster Risk Reduction
 - climate change adaptation
 - natural disaster response
 - inter-ethnic conflict
 - economic development
- c** Municipal Capacity Building
 - pro-poor policies
 - public participation/planning efforts

Vulnerable People

- a** Women's Working Roles
 - feminization of the urban workforce
 - b** Urban Poor
 - pro-poor policies
 - c** Youth and Street Kids
 - education and capacity building
 - public involvement
- ### Cross-Issue Sectors
- a** Social Determinants of Health
 - environmental health and justice
 - proximity to toxins; waste; water and air pollutants; health education
 - b** Land Tenure
 - politically motivated displacement
 - temporary housing/IDP and refugee camps
 - c** Rural-Urban Migration
 - personal legal status and rights
 - circular migration

Economic and Social Connections

- a** Social Relationships and Networks
 - concentrated poverty
 - limited social networks
 - limited economic networks

Cross-Issue Sectors

- a** Livelihood
 - access to capital and financial services
 - economic self reliance and sustainability
 - environmental sustainability

Cross-Issue Sectors

- a** Governance/community decision making
 - public participation
 - community development
 - capacity building



Photo: China for Mercy Corps

The Approach in Action: China

The young people of the Yi minority community in the Liangshan autonomous prefecture of Sichuan Province face numerous challenges growing up, including an underdeveloped local education system and economy, and a rampant spread of drugs and the HIV/AIDS virus. The recent boom of out-migration, where community members move to urban areas in search of work and livelihood opportunities, exacerbates these risks for youth. In order to help the young Yi people, especially girls, to better deal with these problems, Mercy Corps partnered with the Liangshan Yi for Empowerment (LYFE) Center to undertake a 3-year program entitled GLOW (*Giving Leadership Opportunities to Young Women*). Mercy Corps and LYFE have framed this poverty relief and capacity building program as a preventative urban poverty strategy in an effort to stem the negative impacts of cyclical urban-rural migration.

Who We Work With

Mercy Corps' drive to find linkages where others see gaps, and opportunities when others find challenges empowers us to encourage and believe in the entrepreneurial potential of the people we serve.

We bring about positive change by applying Mercy Corps's vision for change that engages the public, private and civic sectors. Our urban programs work in partnership with:

- **Civil Society:** **Civic organizations** that are comprised of, or work for, **resource-poor citizens** (formal and informal cooperatives, local CBOs/ NGOs)
- **Private Sector:** **Small businesses and entrepreneurs**, because they are strategically positioned to fill the economic gaps within their communities and provide urban poor with linkages to upward economic mobility.
- **Public Sector:** **Governments and public agencies**, because they are integral to enabling urban citizens the opportunities and rights needed to improve their livelihood.

GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS

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